

Statement on the Department of Health and Human Services Report on Prescription Drug Coverage

April 10, 2000

Today's release of the Department of Health and Human Services report on prescription drug coverage, spending, and pricing practices provides further evidence of the need for a voluntary, affordable Medicare prescription drug benefit that is available to all beneficiaries. This report makes clear that uninsured seniors not only lack prescription drug coverage but also are denied the significant discounts and rebates that those with coverage receive. This price gap is wide and growing. It's time to level the playing field for both coverage and prices for all of America's seniors.

Although the HHS report provides the most comprehensive analysis to date on prescription drugs, there is still much that needs to be learned and conveyed to the general public and to policymakers on this important issue. For this reason, I am also announcing that the administration will hold a national conference this summer on drug pricing and discounting practices and their impact on Medicare beneficiaries and pharmaceutical innovation. I believe this conference will help us determine how the best

purchasing and quality improvement practices from the private sector can be incorporated into a Medicare prescription benefit.

I am encouraged that there is growing support from both parties to address the prescription drug cost and coverage problems that burden our Nation's seniors and people with disabilities. As today's report makes clear, the challenge of prescription drug coverage for the uninsured and underinsured Medicare populations is one that afflicts millions of beneficiaries of every age and income level. However, we must make certain that any legislative proposal is more than a benefit in name only. As I have said repeatedly, the only way this issue can be adequately remedied is through a Medicare drug benefit that is voluntary, affordable, accessible, and administered competitively, using the most successful private practices to negotiate discounts on behalf of seniors. It should be enacted in the context of broader reform that modernizes and strengthens the program. I believe that the release of today's report shows how vital it is to reach this goal.

Statement on the Announcement of a Summit Meeting Between South Korea and North Korea

April 10, 2000

I welcome the announcement that the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will hold a historic first summit in June. Direct dialog between the two Koreas is something we have long advocated and is

fundamental to solving the problems of the Korean Peninsula. This announcement is testimony to the wisdom and long-term vision of President Kim Dae-jung's engagement policy. I congratulate both leaders on their decision to meet.

Statement on the Greek Legislative Elections

April 10, 2000

I congratulate Konstandinos Simitis, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, and his PASOK party for their victory in the Greek leg-

islative elections on April 9. I also applaud Konstandinos Karamanlis and the New Democracy Party for running a fine campaign. The